

No. 19

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ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY

JACK LIGHTFOOT'S CYCLONE FINISH

OR HOW VICTORY WAS SNATCHED FROM DEFEAT



BY MAURICE STEVENS

"Hold him, Rex!" shouted Jack, as he came plunging toward the spot where the collie had overtaken the fleeing thief. "Good dog, Rex, hold him!"

Publishers' Note. "Teach the American boy how to become an athlete, and lay the foundation for a Constitution greater than that of the United States."—Wise sayings from "Tip Top." There has never been a time when the boys of this great country took so keen an interest in all manly and health-giving sports as they do to-day. As proof of this witness the record-breaking throngs that attend college struggles on the gridiron, as well as athletic and baseball games, and other tests of endurance and skill. In a multitude of other channels this love for the "life strenuous" is making itself manifest, so that, as a nation, we are rapidly forging to the front as seekers of honest sport. Recognizing this "handwriting on the wall," we have concluded that the time has arrived to give this vast army of young enthusiasts a publication devoted exclusively to invigorating out-door life. We feel we are justified in anticipating a warm response from our sturdy American boys, who are sure to revel in the stirring phases of sport and adventure, through which our characters pass from week to week.

ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY

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No. 19.

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JACK LIGHTFOOT'S CYCLONE FINISH;

OR,

How Victory Was Snatched from Defeat.

By MAURICE STEVENS.

CHARACTERS IN THIS STORY.

Jack Lightfoot, the best all-round athlete in Cranford or vicinity, a lad clear of eye, clean of speech, and, after he had conquered a few of his faults, possessed of a faculty for *doing things* while others were talking, that by degrees caused him to be looked upon as the natural leader in all the sports Young America delights in—a boy who in learning to conquer himself put the power into his hands to wrest victory from others.

Tom Lightfoot, Jack's cousin, and sometimes his rival; though their striving for the mastery was always of the friendly, generous kind. Tom was called the "Book-Worm" by his fellows, on account of his love for studying such secrets of nature as practical observers have discovered and published; so that he possessed a fund of general knowledge calculated to prove useful when his wandering spirit took him abroad into strange lands.

Ned Skeen, of impulsive, nervous temperament, one of those who followed the newcomer, Birkett, being dazzled by the dash of his manner, and the free way in which he flung money around.

Lafe Lampton, a big, hulking chap, with an ever present craving for something to eat. Lafe always had his appetite along, and proved a staunch friend of our hero through thick and thin.

Kennedy, a constable at Cranford.

Kate Strawn and Nellie Conner, some of the girls at Cranford.

Phil Kirtland, once Jack's rival in athletic sports, but now working hand in glove with him on the baseball team.

Nat Kimball, an undersized fellow, whose hobby was the study of *jiu-jitsu*, and who had a dread of germs.

Jubal Marlin and **Wilson Crane**, some of the Cranford boys who belonged to the baseball team.

Wizard Casey, the pitcher of the Tidewater nine.

Weary Willie, the wandering hobo, who had a grudge against Jack to nurse.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE MALAPAN RIVER.

"By hemlock, this seems like old times!"

The speaker was Jubal Marlin, of course; for none of the other boys used Jube's favorite expression, and they could not have given it the peculiar nasal twist which he did even if they had tried ever so hard.

Jack Lightfoot and his friends were in two boats, out on the waters of Malapan River, and the time was night, or rather early morning shortly before sunrise.

The bright moon which had favored them was now behind a bank of clouds near the horizon, and the mists of morning were beginning to creep over the surface of the stream.

"Wow! There goes my cap!" Ned Skeen cried. "You did that, Wilson Crane—you knocked it off my head."

"Well, if you wouldn't squirm round so like an eel it wouldn't have happened!" Wilson retorted, as he poked for the cap with an oar and drew it toward the boat, at the same time reaching out his hand to get it.

"Now, Ned will have water on the brain," said Tom Lightfoot, as Skeen wrung out his soaked cap and put it on.

"You fellows are making too much noise," warned Jack Lightfoot, from the other boat. "You'll scare all the fish out of the river."

"Some of you chaps will make fish bait pretty soon, if you don't quit wiggling that boat," added Lafe Lampton, who was pulling an oar at Jack's side. "You came nigh turning it over then."

"Oh, we're all right," Jubal assured him. "And, say, this makes me think of the time that me an' pap co't that lambastin' big lot o' shad I was tellin' yeou fellers abaout. It was jist sich a night as this, mist on the worter, an' everything still as a mill pond."

But Jack Lightfoot and his friends were not expecting to catch shad that night, though they had a shad net and were preparing to use it.

Earlier in the season the shad came into Malapan River from the sea, urged by that strange instinct that drives them up into fresh water to spawn.

Malapan River flowed eastwardly from Cranford Lake into the sea at the town of Tidewater, and along its shores were the huts and the homes of a few fishermen. The shad season was the great harvest of these men, but that was long past now, though they continued to use their nets, taking other varieties of fish from the Malapan and from the sea off the mouth of the river, which was much lower down, for the boys in the boats were not now a great distance from the lower end of Cranford Lake where it issued into the river.

They had been to the town of Tidewater, to see about some arrangements for the ball game to be played there soon by the Cranford nine and the Tidewater Tigers, the third game of the season with the Tidewater nine.

They had taken a wagon to the lower end of the lake, and there secured two boats, in which they had drifted down to Tidewater; returning up the river in the same craft.

All this they had done simply for the fun of it.

It would have been much easier to go to Tidewater by rail, or by horse or vehicle.

But Jack and his friends liked the idea of this novel way of making the trip.

On the return, they had reached the homes of the shad fishermen of whom they had hired the boats. These men were Jack's friends and admirers, and there the boys had arranged to stop overnight and go on home in the morning.

Jubal's father had been a shad fisherman for a time, and Jubal had helped him one or two seasons. Hence this stop with the fishermen gave Jubal abundant opportunity to tell marvelous fishing stories of what he and his "pap" had done in the fishing line.

It had also led the boys of Jack's party to undertake a little fishing for "fun."

And that is what they were doing now.

There were some shad nets owned by the fishermen, and one of these the boys had borrowed.

It was now in Jack's boat, ready for use.

They had already made one "drift," or "drag" as the fishermen called it, and were preparing to make another.

In the earlier part of the night the fishermen had been at work, using not only their own boats, but the two belonging to Jack and his friends.

The fishermen's work was through, and they had routed out our friends, according to agreement, fairly jerking the sleepy boys out of their beds, for that had been the understanding.

"You'll have to pound me black and blue before you wake me," Lafe had told them, "but go right on with your pounding until I get ready to hit you, and then you'll know that I've waked up."

Others of the party had needed almost as much thumping and shaking as Lafe.

"I think we're far enough out now," said Jack, when they had rowed almost to the middle of the river.

"Ain't yeou gittin' too clost to that island?" Jubal inquired.

"No, it's above us."

"Tain't so very far, I know," said Jubal. "Can't be. And we don't want to go to droring up any roots and things from the trees of that island."

"Maybe we'll get another boot," said Jack, "and then you'll have a pair."

An old boot had been caught in the net on the previous drift, and Jubal, setting his hands on it, had yanked it out thinking it was a fish, and had then been laughed at for his mistake.

"By granny, if we haul up as many different kinds of things as we did before we kin set up a curiosity shop in Cranford when we git back. Haw-haw!"

There was no real "hauling," however, when drifting nets were used. The hauling seines were of a different make. The drifting nets were of fine twine and large mesh, and the fish were secured by "gilling them." That is, in striving to break through the net they were hung by the gills. Jubal had thought the old boot was a fish thus caught.

"Stand by now," said Jack. "All ready!"

Lafe and the others, among them Phil Kirtland and Brodie Strawn, kept the boat headed toward the opposite shore and out into deep water.

Jack Lightfoot rose in the stern, holding the pole staff in his hand, and, steadyng himself, threw it from him out into the water.

This staff had one end weighted. When it struck the water the weighted end went down.

Then the net with its many cork floats and leads was paid out over the stern of the boat.

As the boat was pulled on further into the stream the line of bobbing corks behind it showed as a dotted bow on the surface of the water.

When all of the net had been paid out the pole staff at that end went over into the water.

Between the two pole staffs was now a crescent of bobbing corks, these corks supporting the upper edge of the long seinelike net. The lower edge of the net was held down in the water by the leads attached to it. Thus the net was stretched upright in the water, and lay across this portion of the stream like a great fence made of woven threads.

The lead line went well down toward the bottom of the river, while the upper end of the net was supported by the corks on the surface.

The only thing to do now was to let it drift with the current down the river, and keep close to it with the boats.

One boat went to one end, where a pole staff showed, and the second boat to the other terminus, where the second pole staff was dimly visible in the faint light.

Fish passing up or down the river would strike against the net, and in trying to push through it would be "gilled." Small fish could go through the holes in the net and would not be caught.

In this way great quantities of shad were caught in the season, for at such times the fish were crazy to get upriver to spawn.

Of course the boys did not expect to catch a great many fish by this method now; they were simply having "fun." If they caught anything worth while the pleasure would be that much the greater.

Suddenly there was a splash in the water near the cork line, and the corks there were violently agitated.

"By granny, something struck!" Jubal shouted.

"It was another shoe," said Jack. "Don't risk your neck by jumping over to get it. We'll haul it out for you by and by."

"And, by gravy, there's another!" yelled Jube, as a second bobbing of corks took place, with a stir in the water in front of the net. "This makes me think o' ole times with pap. This blamed ole river's full of fish, I bet! Whoop, there's still another!"

All up and down the line of floats there were occasional disturbances, showing where fish were striking against the net as they tried to pass up or downstream.

Then came a terrific flounce, and a tremendous commotion, the water near the center of the net fairly boiling.

The boys gripped their oars, and Jubal sang out again:

"It's a gol-darn sturgeon, and I'll bet a doughnut! He's rippin' time aout of that ole net, tew! Better git in there before he makes fiddle strings aout of it."

Jack's boat was already moving toward the scene of the disturbance.

The boat that held Jubal and his companions did the same.

The threshing and flouncing continued.

Jack laid hold of the line of corks and snaked the bow of his boat along, and Jubal's boat, approaching from the other direction, was advanced now in the

same way, until both came up to the point where the big fish was still floundering and splashing the water.

"Yes, it's a sturgeon," said Jack; "must be!"

"It's a whale, I reckon!" cried Wilson Crane. "He rose and give this boat a thunderin' kick just then."

"It's a merman," reaching up his foot for that shoe Jubal captured last trip," said Jack.

"By hemlock, he can't have it!" shouted Jube. "If it's a mermaid even, I won't give her that shoe, fur it's my property naow."

Jack and Jubal, each in the bow of his boat, reached over and began to draw up the line, when such a floundering began that they feared the big fish would not only tear the net to pieces, but get away.

"We'll have to haul the net ashore," said Tom Lightfoot.

"No," said Jack, "I think I've got him, right here in this loop of the net. Here he comes! Steady now!"

He drew up the net, and the fish came up without much struggling.

But when the boys in Jack's boat took hold of the net and began to draw it over the bow the fish began to thresh again.

Yet they drew him up and flung him into the boat.

The fish was a large sturgeon, with the net so wound round him that he was as helpless as a fly in a spider's web.

"He kicked some holes in the net," said Jack, ruefully. "We'll have a bill to pay, I guess."

Then the drift net was set again and permitted to float on down the river, after a few of the fish that had been taken had been removed.

Other fish struck against it, making the floats bob and quiver.

Then Jubal yelled again.

"Wow!" he squalled, in a startled way. "What in time kind of a fish is that, tryin' to climb up into yeour boat?"

CHAPTER II.

WHAT IT WAS.

Jack Lightfoot was equally astonished and startled. A dark head, that to his fancy resembled the head of a seal, had risen in the water by the side of his oar and seemed determined to hoist itself into the boat.

"What is it?" yelled excitable Ned Skeen, and one of the boys in Jack's boat seemed about to strike the creature on the head.

Jack stayed him. Though Jack was himself excited, he had not lost his judgment.

A strange whining noise came now from the black head in the water.

Jack bent over, peering down.

Then he shouted:

"It's a dog!"

He put out his hand to it.

"Old fellow, what are you doing out here?" he said. All the boys were shouting and talking.

"Been taking a swim," said Jack, "and now want to get into the boat?"

He put his hand kindly on the dog's head. Again the animal tried to climb up into the boat, and whined pathetically.

"It's a dog, fellows! Steady the boat and I'll try to get him in."

He caught the dog by the skin of the neck, and hoisting with all his might fairly lifted it out of the water and over into the boat, where it tumbled down as if in a state of exhaustion.

"Do you suppose he followed us out from the shore?" said Tom.

"Belongs to one of the fishermen, likely," was Ned Skeen's guess.

"I don't think any o' them fishermen have got a dog," objected Jubal.

"They may have a dozen, for all you know," said Lafe.

"Well, I never seen none raound!"

"Nor any square," said Skeen.

"This fellow seems to be pretty square," Jack declared, as he patted the dog on the head; and was rewarded by the dog shaking water all over him and the other boys in the boat.

"Jiminy Crickets, throw him back," cried Lafe, laughing; "he'll drown us!"

"Say, fellers," Jubal called from the other boat, "that net is gittin' away."

Jack patted the dog again, and the boats were turned down the river, following the drifting net.

Jack could hardly tell much about the dog, for the mist that hung over the water, together with the darkness, made it impossible to see the animal very distinctly.

But when they went ashore, with the day breaking, and conducted the dog into one of the fishermen's houses, they discovered that he was a handsome shepherd, though he looked weak and emaciated.

"Blamed ef I know whar that critter come frum!" said the fisherman, as he looked at the dog and heard the boys' story. "He don't b'long ter none of us, ner he don't b'long raound here. And I swan tew man, I'd like tew know whut he was dewin' aout thar in the river!"

"Jack is such a favorite that the dog just had to come to him," said Tom Lightfoot, with a chuckle. "You've heard of these charming chaps that nothing can resist—the fellows that seem to be human lode-stones, drawing everything to them? Well, that's Jack. The dog just had to come, if he was anywhere near the boat?"

The fisherman looked wise and laughed.

"Ef that's so I'd like him to go back out thar and draw up from the bottom uv the river the silver watch that dropped aout uv my pocket las' year."

"I think I know who got your watch," said Jack, whose face had colored under Tom's joking words.

"Yew do? Who wuz it?"

"Why, didn't you read about that man in New York, the other day? I think he worked in a restaurant, or a hotel. He was cleaning a fish, and he found a silver watch in its stomach."

The fisherman's face cracked open in a wide grin, for he knew that Jack had invented this.

"I'll write fur that watch ter-day, and claim it as my property. But, say, no jokin'—that dog don't belong raound here! I alloaw he must have jumped off uv one uv the passenger bo'ts. One goes up the river an' back, ye know, every other day."

"But where has he been staying?" asked Jack.

The dog looked up at Jack and thumped the floor with his tail.

Then he came up, and again giving Jack that look lay down at his feet.

"He's yeour property naow," said the fisherman. "He's 'dopted yeou, all right."

"Then I'd like something to feed him with, if you have anything you could spare. He's about starved, I think."

That the dog was ferociously hungry was apparent, when the fisherman produced some old bread and meat. The animal fairly snapped it from Jack's fingers.

"Did you ever see anything eat like it?" said Jack, pleased with the dog, and glad that he could give it something.

"Never," said Tom, solemnly, "except perhaps Lafe. When it comes to eating I don't believe anything on earth could beat Lafe."

This, and the sight of the dog eating, made Lafe so hungry that he could hardly wait for the breakfast which was being prepared.

The day had fully come, but the fog and mist still hung over the river.

When this broke away, out in front of the cabins, but a little distance upstream, a wooded island came sharply into view.

"There's where the dog came from," said Jack. "That's my guess."

"It's a good guess," said Tom. "Guess again, and tell us how he got there."

"From that steamer, probably. Likely he jumped off the boat and swam to that island. Not finding anything to eat there, he's been starving ever since. This morning he swam to our boats, hearing us make a racket out there."

The fisherman had gone outside and was looking at the big sturgeon. His eyes snapped greedily.

"Tell yeou whut I'll do," he said to Jack. "Lemme keep this yer sturgeon an' I won't charge yeou fellers nuthin' 'tall fur the damage ye done to thet net."

"Oh, we intended to give it to you, for the use of the boat."

"Thet so? It's mine, is it?"

"Yes—for the use of the boat."

The fisherman turned the sturgeon over and looked at it critically.

"Satisfies me, thet does. Blamed ef I don't think I kin git twenty dollars fer that sturgeon, anyhaow. Mighty nigh it, I tell yeou. I'll fix thet net, an'

charge ye nuthin'. I ain't hed th' luck ter git a sturgeon in my net the hull blame season."

"Twenty dollars?" gasped Jubal Marlin, whose one ambition it was to make money. "Great hemlocks! Did yeou hear that? I'm goin' intew the fishin' business myself."

CHAPTER III.

ON THE ISLAND.

After breakfast Jack took one of the boats, and accompanied by Lafe, Tom and Jubal set out for the island, from which he fancied the dog had come.

As a help to the solution of the question, he took the dog also in the boat.

Running the craft up under a fringe of willows, they tied it there and leaped out on the island.

The dog had whined uneasily as the island was approached, and now seemed almost frightened, as Jack pulled him ashore.

He was a much better-looking animal than when he came into Jack's boat. Good feeding had taken away something of his gauntness, and his coat was dry and glossy. He was a handsome collie, with the typical collie markings, rather darker in color than usual, and Jack had given him the name of Rex.

As Jack and the other boys moved out upon the island the dog hung back, shivering and apparently frightened. He seemed to want to return to the boat.

"What do you suppose makes him do that?" said Lafe.

"He wants tew go back an' git something more tew eat," suggested Jubal, jokingly.

"Oh, don't mention eating—it makes me hungry!"

Lafe reached into his pockets and began to dig round to find if he had not a few more peanuts stowed there.

He found one, and, breaking it open, put the kernels in his mouth.

"I think the dog's afraid of something on the island," he suggested, as if his wits were now keener.

"Maybe he smells a wild cat," suggested Tom.

"There's something here he don't like," Jack agreed.

This became more and more apparent as they skirted round the shore of the island.

Suddenly Jack stopped and pointed to the ground.

"See there!"

Human footprints were visible—the footprints of a man, who was not very well shod.

"Looks as if we are taking the dog back to his owner," said Tom.

"And that he doesn't want to go," Jack added.

The tracks led into the undergrowth. Stirred by the sight the boys followed, with the dog slinking along at their heels.

The tracks grew fresher, and were easy to follow, for the ground was now moist and soft.

The island was not of large extent, and they expected at any moment to come upon the man who had made the trail.

But the tracks changed their course several times, and the boys, following, went clear across the island and back.

As they returned toward the side they had landed on and came out into view of the water, they were astonished to see a man leap from the undergrowth not far away and run with heavy steps toward their boat.

"Stop!" shouted Jack, bounding in pursuit, in which all of the boys joined.

The dog whined, seemed about to flee into the bushes, and then followed more slowly and with reluctance.

The man was a tramp, as could be seen at a glance. His clothing was ragged and dirty and his whole appearance proclaimed what he was.

He was about to leap into the boat, and was untying it from the willows, when Jack rushed on him.

"Here! What do you mean?" Jack cried, while the other boys came bounding forward.

The tramp drew back in fright.

"What do you mean?" Jack demanded again

"Nothin'," was the sullen answer.

"But you were going to take this boat!"

"An' you was chasin' me!"

"We came across your tracks and were following them."

"What fur?"

He stood in the shadows of the willows, glowering at the boys.

"I wasn't hurtin' you, ner nuthin', was I?"

"No. We just wanted to see who made the tracks."

"An' I was jist t'inkin' dat I'd slide, if youse was chasin' me. But I don't need yer ole boat; I got one meself."

Jack looked at the man's heavy, brutish features.

"Say," he cried, suddenly, "I've seen you before!"

"Well, dat's nuttin'. I got an extensive acquaintance."

He tried to laugh.

"I'm 'quainted wid dat dog youse has got, too. He b'longs ter me."

He moved toward the dog, which drew back. When he tried to put his hand on it the dog growled and snapped at him, and then retreated.

"Where did you get him?" Jack asked.

"I allus had 'im."

"People like you don't usually keep dogs, and they don't like dogs."

"Air youse speakin' to me?" was the insolent remark.

"Yes, and I know who you are! You're one of the tramps who kidnaped me one time and held me a prisoner in the Painted Cave. I think you were the leader of that gang."

"You're buttin' inter de wrong parlor car now," said the tramp, sullenly, a look of fear spreading over his face.

"Oh, no; I know you. You're the very fellow. I wish Wilson Crane was here, for he'd recognize you, too. Wilson was with me that day."*

The tramp drew further back.

"If this is your dog you've been starving him! And you've beat him shamefully. That is seen by the way he acts. He was afraid to come to the island, and now he's got his tail between his legs and is ready to run when you go near him."

"Youse know more'n I do. I don't allus have too much ter eat myself. Whatever I had I sheered wid him. Come yer, you!"

The dog backed away, with a whine, when spoken to thus.

"Oh, he knows me, all right! Come yer, you!"

The dog did not come. Instead, he showed his teeth.

The tramp again spoke to the dog. Jack saw that it was not regard for the dog that made him do this, but a desire to get away from the subject of that kidnaping.

When the tramp again approached the dog the latter growled at him once more, and retreated behind Jack as if for protection.

"Stay with the boat," said Jack, speaking to Lafe and Jubal.

Then he called to the dog, and walked away with Tom, with Rex trotting at his heels and evidently glad to get away from the tramp.

Before they were out of sight of the boys left with the boat Jack and Tom saw that the tramp had disappeared into the bushes.

"What's your idea?" Tom asked.

"I want to look over the island a bit. I'll know then, I hope, how much to believe of that hobo's story."

"He's one of the tramps who kidnaped you?"

"Sure."

"He ought to be in jail!"

"He will be, if I can put him there."

At the upper end of the small island they found more tracks in the soft soil and in the sandy shore, and back from the water a short distance they discovered a hut of boughs, with some broken bits of bread and other food.

"He's been staying here for a while, and begging from the people in the neighborhood."

"There's no one much in the neighborhood."

"There are a few families over there."

Jack indicated the shore opposite the fishermen's huts.

"You follow that trail, and I'll follow this," he said to Tom.

Tom thereupon burrowed deeper into the undergrowth, and Jack continued along the shore for a short distance.

He had not gone far before he came to a skiff—a cheap, flat-bottomed boat—much dilapidated, and with one broken paddle in it.

"The tramp's boat, which he must have stolen from some one."

He stooped to pick up the broken oar, and the tramp rushed at him from the bushes near at hand, which he

*See No. 4, "Jack Lightfoot's Athletic Tournament; or, Breaking the Record Quarter-Mile Dash."

had gained and where he had remained in hiding when he saw Jack approaching.

The tramp had a stone which he had picked up as a weapon, and this came flying at Jack's head.

It missed, for Jack ducked, and the stone went splash into the river. The next moment the tramp, with a growling oath, was leaping on Jack with a knife.

Jack wheeled like a flash, and brought the oar down so sharply on the rascal's head that he dropped to the sand like a bullock stricken in the shambles.

Then Jack's voice rang out, summoning Tom; and the latter came bounding through the bushes.

"Seen him?" Tom asked.

He stopped and stared when he beheld the tramp lying at Jack's feet.

"Holy smoke!"

"He jumped at me," said Jack, "and I knocked him down with this broken oar. I hope I haven't killed the scoundrel."

He had not. The tramp stirred, rubbed his head, and then sat up, winking as if the sun shone too hot in his eyes. When he saw the boys standing before him he dropped back upon the sand. The dog came sniffing toward him, and growled.

"Let up on a feller, can't ye?" the tramp now whined. "I ain't doin' nuttin' ter trouble you fellers."

Jack held up the knife.

"You were trying to use this on me."

The tramp half rose again, a cunning look in his little eyes. Evidently he wanted to get hold of that knife.

"See that he don't escape," said Jack, turning to the painter of the boat with the knife.

Seeing that Jack meant to cut away a section of the rope, no doubt to make cords with, the tramp would have jumped to his feet, but Tom drew out a little revolver and covered him with it. As for the dog, it lay down, taking a position in front of the tramp, as if it, too, were guarding him.

"Steady!" cried Tom. "We don't want to hurt you, but we don't intend to have you get away."

"Let up!" the tramp begged.

Jack cut away the rope, and, taking some strands, proceeded to tie the tramp's hands.

Having done that, he drew the boat well up on the shore so that the water could not carry it away.

"Get up!" he said now, speaking to the tramp.

The latter rose sullenly. He would have run but for his fear of Tom's revolver, for his feet had not been tied.

"Wot youse goin' to do wit' me?" he inquired, doggedly.

"We'll talk that over when we get you ashore," was Jack's answer.

What he meant to do was to deliver him up to Kennedy, the Cranford constable, and then have charges brought against him for that old kidnaping affair.

This was not in any spirit of revenge. It seemed to be due to the general public as a measure of safety. So long as this man and others like him were wandering round the country there could be no security for anyone. They were inveterate thieves, scarers of lonely women and children, and a generally disreputable lot.

"Now, tell me where you got this dog?" Jack demanded. "You can't make me believe that he is yours."

"I been on dis island ten days," the tramp admitted. "One mornin' when I wakes up, dere he is."

"And you let him starve, and you beat him!"

"Wot you expect? Kin I give 'im my wittles?"

"Why didn't you set him ashore in your boat?"

The tramp shrugged his shoulders and did not answer; but it was evident that he had been too lazy, or had not humanity enough to care whether the dog lived or died.

"I didn't bring 'im 'ere," he said, finally, when Jack questioned him again; "so why sh'u'd I do anyt'ing like dat? Dat boat ain't a dog ferry."

"Well, you'll come along with us!"

Jack indicated the direction he wanted to take, and then they moved off, Jack at the tramp's side, and Tom and the dog following, Tom holding the little revolver as a threat to keep the fellow from making a break for liberty.

The two boys left on the other side of the island were wildly astonished when Jack and Tom appeared with the tramp as a prisoner.

Jack explained in a few words.

"We'll take him over to the fishermen's huts. Maybe they'll know something about him. But, anyway, we'll hold him for that kidnaping business. Wilson will be able to help me in identifying him. I know he's the man."

"Let up, can't you?" the tramp protested. "I never seen you before, an' dat's a fac'."

But Jack was obdurate.

The boat was pushed out from the shore, and the tramp forced into it.

Then Jack and the other boys climbed in, the dog still keeping close by Jack's side, and watching the bound scamp as if he feared him.

The truth was, that the tramp had been far more cruel in his treatment of this handsome animal than he had admitted, and the manner of the dog showed as much. He had not only permitted it to starve there on the island, but through sheer cruelty when it came up to him and he could lay hands on it he had knocked it down and then had beaten and kicked it with merciless severity.

He knew that the dog had been lost from the little steamer that came every other day up the river; that it had jumped from the steamer in the night; yet he would not admit this, through sheer stubbornness, and because he would say nothing that he thought might be pleasing to his captors.

Bending to the oars now the boys sent the boat flying across the river.

The swift current made them swing across to the shore some distance above the fishermen's homes where they hugged the bank.

As they did so, with a sudden wild yell the tramp rose in the boat and plunged from it headlong into the river.

"Jiminy crickets!" Lafe gasped, dropping an oar, and then fishing for it with his hand.

"Watch for him; he's bound to come up!" said Jack, ready to shoot the boat in the direction in which the tramp's head might appear.

All sat watching the stream.

The dog lifted his nose and howled mournfully.

"By hemlock, he's drowned himself!" said Jubal, as the tramp's head did not appear.

When a further time had elapsed and still the tramp's

head did not come into view all the boys began to grow excited and nervous.

They pulled the boat here and there, looking for him, still expecting to see his head pop to the surface of the stream.

"I'm afraid he has been drowned," Jack admitted. "He was tied—that is, his hands were tied—you know."

The time lengthened to more than five minutes; a longer period, they were sure, than the tramp could stay under the water without drowning.

There were some willows growing on the shore, but it did not seem that he could have gained those and concealed himself under them.

To make sure they pushed up to the willows and made there an examination, which was fruitless.

They rowed round and round in a widening circle, and the dog howled as if he knew that something dreadful had happened.

Jack's face grew white and worried. It was not a pleasant thing to believe that he had caused the death even of a tramp.

For a quarter of an hour they continued that search. When they were sure the tramp was not to rise to the surface they rowed hurriedly down to the landing in front of the fishermen's homes, to report the catastrophe.

The boys left behind there came rushing down to greet them, asking questions. They as yet knew nothing about the tramp, though they had heard that singular yell and the mournful howls of the dog.

They were astonished when they heard the singular story.

All in Jack's boat were considerably shaken by what had happened, for it seemed almost certain that the tramp, in thinking he could reach the shore and escape, had been drowned.

"By hemlock, I reckon he struck a rock er somethin', when he div," said Jubal, who had already voiced that opinion. "That would stun him, ye know, and he drowned before he could come up ag'in. I knowed a thing happen like that once. It was when pap and me was fishin' daown at——"

All the boys were climbing out of the boat.

Jubal's reminiscent remarks were broken by an-

other wild yell, like that heard when the tramp leaped overboard.

Then, to the astonishment of Jack and all the others, the tramp scrambled from the water behind the boat, and with a series of quick leaps gained the shore and fled along it into the underbrush, running with the speed of a frightened deer, and leaving a watery trail where the river water dripped down from his soaked clothing.

He had, it seemed, broken his bonds, and then in diving, risen behind the boat; and had held on there with his hands, his whole body under water, and little beyond his nose thrust out for air.

And there he had clung, while the boys searched the river for him, hanging on until they reached the shore where he could set his feet on the sandy bottom.

Tom whipped out his little revolver, and the boys started in pursuit, while the dog barked loudly and chased along with them.

But Tom did not wish to shoot the fellow, and the bushes hid him and concealed him well before the pursuers reached the place where he disappeared.

CHAPTER IV.

KATE STRAWN.

Kate Strawn came slowly down the street in the direction of Cranford Lake.

She was a handsome, dark-eyed girl, with clear, dark complexion. The resemblance between her and her brother, Brodie, was noticeable. Like Brodie she was strong-willed and self-reliant; yet she was kinder and more tender-hearted than Brodie, and lacked his stiffness and aggressiveness.

Her eyes were fixed on the lake, which never, it seemed to her, had looked more beautiful than this morning. She loved the lake and the town of Cranford. There was not, in her opinion, a prettier place anywhere than the spot in which she had been born and where she had always lived.

A number of sailboats were out, their white sails glinting in the sunshine, and the trail of smoke over Tiger's Point told her that the little lake steamer was approaching.

At the corner of the street above the old carriage

shop where the high-school boys had their gymnasium she was joined by some other girls, among them Nellie Conner, and they went on together in the direction of the lake.

The contrast between Nellie Conner and Kate Strawn was marked. Yet they were the best of friends. This is not to say that they did not sometimes indulge in school-girl quarrels, or that things did not go wrong sometimes with their friendship. Often, in fact, little matters had arisen, but these small trifles had not broken the chain of affection.

"We've been waiting for you an hour," said Nellie, exaggerating, for the time of the waiting had not been ten minutes.

But, then, ten minutes may sometimes seem as long as an hour, if the waiter is impatient.

Nevertheless, she put her arm round Kate's waist and walked at her side.

"The boys have returned from Tidewater," said Nellie. "They brought lots of fish with them, too; I saw Jack taking some home with him. They must have been fishing while they were away."

"That's why they were gone so long, I guess," said one of the other girls.

"The game is going to be Saturday," remarked Kate. "Brodie said it was."

"Yes, it's to be on Saturday. My, how pretty the lake is this morning! We'll get a boat and go rowing."

"There's one of the boys coming now," said Kate, who had glanced toward the gym.

"Yes, it's Tom Lightfoot."

Seeing Tom wave his hands to them, the girls stopped and waited his approach.

"Could you come over to the gym?" he asked, speaking to Kate.

She slipped her arm from about Nellie's waist.

"Why, yes, if you want me to. What is it?"

"And we're not invited!" said Nellie, with a laugh. "What have you got over there?"

"Something for you to see."

"For all of us?"

"We'd like to have all of you come."

"You?" cried Kate. "You don't belong at this gym."

"No, but he belongs to Jack," was Nellie's sly remark.

"Well, come on over," Tom urged.

The girls went, asking Tom innumerable questions, to which he would give no answers.

"I'll tell you when you get there."

"Some new stunts you fellows are doing?" said Kate.

"Tell us about Tidewater," Nellie requested. "What about the game?"

"It's to be Saturday."

"We're all going," Kate announced. "We may go in the barge, though mother's rather afraid to have me go in that since that accident at Mildale, when the horses ran away."

"I'm afraid of that barge now!" Nellie declared.

"I shouldn't think you would be," said Tom. "You were the heroine of that occasion."

Nellie's fair face flushed.

She had saved the life of Jack Lightfoot at that time by standing in front of the runaway horses while Jack lay on the ground in the road in a dead faint, turning them aside by holding up before her a board, which caused them to shy round his prostrate form.

But Nellie never liked to talk of that. She declared she was no "heroine," and that anybody would have done the same thing.

Nellie's eyes were blue, almost as deep a blue as those of Lafe Lampton, and her cheeks were fair as lilies, with a very pretty blush coming into them now and then. She was slighter in form than her friend, and had not Kate's natural courage and aggressiveness, yet in that time of need no one could have been braver. Heroines are often made by circumstances, so Nellie thought. She was sure that she would run from a mouse, even though she had stood so boldly up in front of those terrified and maddened horses.

When they reached the carriage shop they found several boys awaiting them there, among others Jack Lightfoot.

"Come right in," said Jack. "We want to show you our find."

"Your 'find'?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"Come in and see."

When they had climbed the stairway and entered the gym., where there were more boys, a handsome Scotch collie came bounding to greet Jack.

"Why, Jack," cried Kate, "where did you get that dog?"

"That's the 'find'!" said Jack. "Don't you think he's handsome?"

"Oh, what a lovely collie!" exclaimed Nellie, stooping to pat the dog.

But he leaped upon her with his feet, and then she did not think he was so "lovely."

"Where—how did you find him?" was Kate's question.

Jack told them, with help from the other boys.

"Well, if that isn't the strangest thing!" all the girls declared in substance, when they heard the story.

"And Rex is a fine name!" said Kate, again admiring the dog, for Jack had told her of the name bestowed on the collie. "I suppose you'll make him your mascot now, since the parrot is gone?"

"You've never heard of the parrot since it got away?" asked one of the girls.

"Not a thing," said Jack.

"Do you think some one stole it?"

"We're afraid it got out and died in the fields somewhere."

"And, by granny, we ain't had any luck sence it went!" said Jubal. "It's bad luck to lose a mascot."

"Make the dog the mascot," Kate suggested, with enthusiasm.

"I can't," Jack declared, mysteriously.

"You can't?"

"No."

"I should like to know why you can't, if he's yours to keep? Oh, perhaps you think the owner will come for him?"

"No, we've inquired about the owner."

"He hadn't any owner?"

"He had, but his owner was drowned."

"How dreadful."

"Yes, he fell off the Malapan River steamer a week or so ago. Or, perhaps, he jumped off. Nobody seems to know. The dog, it is thought, jumped in after him."

"Is that all that's known about the man?"

"That's all. One of the fishermen, who had been at Tidewater, came home before we started for Cranford and brought us the news. He said the man had no family, but only went about with this dog. The dog must have reached the island, when he could not find his master, and there he fell into the hands of that tramp."

"Come here, Rex, you dear old fellow!" cried Kate, kneeling down and patting the dog on the head. "You've had a hard time, haven't you? I wonder what your name used to be? Was it Rex?"

The dog fawned upon her.

"He says it will do for him now, anyway," laughed Jack. "And I think he's going to like you."

Yet Rex had shown great impartiality, being willing to meet and greet anyone who spoke kindly to him.

"I should like to know why you can't make him your mascot? I should think that would be lovely—just the thing, now that you've lost the parrot."

"But the boys of the gym have voted otherwise," said Jack, gravely, though his gray-blue eyes were dancing.

"What have they voted to do?"

She looked at the other boys grouped round her, and at the girls.

Jack drew himself up with an air of profound, though assumed, gravity.

"Miss Kate Strawn, the reason——"

"Miss Kate Strawn!"

"Yes, Miss Strawn, the reason is that the boys of the gym, myself included, have voted to present to you this handsome collie, to take the place of your terrier that died."

Kate's face flushed, both with pleasure and because of sundry memories which this mention of the terrier evoked.

She and Brodie had accused Jack of causing the death of her favorite and pet terrier, afterward discovering that though he had kicked it—for a good reason—another person had thrown the stone which had brought about its death. There had been a time of hard feeling between Kate and Jack over that. And it was almost unpleasant to be reminded of it.

"We hope you'll take it," said Jack, noticing the look in her face. "We want you to—all of us."

"Sure thing," said Jubal; "that's the vote of the hull gym."

The flush passed from Kate's face.

"Well, I'm sure I thank you," she said. "It really is kind of you."

She stooped again and patted the collie.

"He is a beautiful dog, and I know I shall like him as well as I did the terrier. Come here, you dear old Rex! Do you think you'd like to belong to me?"

By the vigorous manner in which Rex wagged his bushy tail it seemed he thought he would like that very much indeed.

"Well, you shall be mine—with this proviso!"

She looked at the boys.

"Name it," said Jack.

"Yes, you can have anything here you want," said Tom, "except me; I don't belong here. I'm just looking on, you know."

There was a dancing, laughing light in Tom's eyes.

"What I meant was," said Kate, "that if I take him it's with the proviso that he becomes the mascot of the Cranford nine, so long as he behaves himself in a proper manner."

Jack swung his cap.

The suggestion pleased him immensely.

"Hooray! the mascot!"

The boys cheered.

Rex barked and jumped around, as if he, too, understood and wanted to join in the cheering.

"He really acts as if he knew he was to be the mascot," said Nellie.

If she was a little envious of the honor that had been conferred on Kate, she concealed it well.

Yet her cheeks were somewhat red.

"By gravy, we ought to had another dog to give to Nellie!" said Jubal. "Ain't any girl in Cranford goes to the ball games any more'n she does, er' whoops it up more for the nine. I reckon we'd be doin' a good thing to buy her a dog."

"Why, the idea!" Nellie cried, her cheeks flushing still more.

She was pleased, but she would rather this had come from Jack than from Jubal. Jube had belonged to the

Gang—perhaps he did still; and the Gang, under the leadership of that young tough, Nicholas Flint, was not a thing to be proud of, as it was composed of about all the worst boys in Cranford.

Yet Jubal seemed to have left these old companions more and more since he had become a member of the high school and of the Cranford nine.

"I'll take Rex to all the ball games I attend, and when I can't go I'll send him," said Kate, again fondling the dog. "And you'll bark for the right side—for Cranford, Rex, won't you?"

Rex, excited by the attention lavished on him, barked vigorously, as if he understood all this.

"So, that's what you wanted me to come up here for?" she said, speaking to Tom.

"Nothing else," he answered, smiling, "except that the fellows always like to have you girls visit their gym. They're too bashful to say this to you, so I'll say it for them. I'm an outsider, you know, and can afford to speak out."

Several of the boys looked as if they thought Tom was just a little forward and plain-spoken in his remarks, but they seconded his statements, nevertheless, declaring that, of course, they were always pleased when the girls came up to look over the gym.

And then all—girls and boys—went down to the lake together, and there, getting boats, they rowed out on its rippling surface, enjoying the delights of boating on this beautiful sheet of water in the charming summer weather.

When Kate Strawn went home she took Rex with her.

He had already become attached to her, and frisked along at her side as she coaxed him on up to the house, where she showed him the shed which he was to occupy at night, and told her brother Brodie of how the dog had been given to her, and how she had insisted that he should also be the mascot of the nine.

And Brodie was pleased. Yet he and Jack Lightfoot had not always got on well together, chiefly because Brodie was a faithful follower of Phil Kirtland, who had long been Jack's rival in the athletic world of Cranford.

CHAPTER V.

THE TRAMP AGAIN.

The Cranford baseball nine and a large number of their friends moved upon the town of Tidewater the afternoon before the game.

They did this chiefly for the reason that Tidewater was a pleasant place in which a few spare hours might be spent.

It was located on a beautiful bay and harbor, into which small ocean steamers came, together with many coasting schooners. It had a good beach, excellent for bathing. And there were also rocky shores, with pleasant, wooded nooks close by the water. So, altogether, Tidewater had many attractions, aside from those the town itself offered. Hence it was always a treat for the Cranford boys and girls to visit Tidewater.

To Jubal Marlin, the chief attractions lay within the town itself, in the streets and in the street cars, in watching the people, and in haunting the wharves, and talking with sailors or wharfmen.

Jack Lightfoot liked as well as Jubal to linger round the wharves and docks.

And he went down to the wharves with Jubal, where they walked about, viewing some of the coasters.

"By granny, I'd like to go in one o' them ships!" remarked Jubal. "I'd like tew sail clean raound the gol-darned ole world in one of 'em."

"I mean to, sometime," said Jack, simply; "but I think I should prefer a steamer."

"Yeou mean tew?"

"Yes, sometime."

"Haow ye a-going tew work it?"

"I don't know yet."

"I bet a nickel yeou never go. Lots o' fellows would like tew, but they ain't many gits off."

Standing by a lumber pile, he noticed a man who looked battered enough to have sailed around the world a dozen times. He attracted Jubal's close attention. Jubal observed, too, that the fingers of one hand were missing.

When the man saw Jubal staring at his maimed hand he smiled.

Thus encouraged, Jubal asked him how he happened to lose his fingers.

"You've been in a circus—the menagerie part, I mean, haven't you?"

"More'n a dozen times," said Jubal, still looking at the hand.

"You've noticed the bones lying in the tiger's cage, where he had made his dinner?"

"Onct I seen bones lyin' in one," said Jubal, thrilled by the expectation of a marvelous revelation of danger with a tiger.

"Well, now did you ever put your hand through the bars of the tiger's cage and try to take out those old bones?"

"Great hemlock, I didn't wanter try nothin' like that!"

The man smiled.

"It's easy."

"So that's the way you lost your fingers, is it?"

"I put my hand through the bars of the cage," said the man, "and—I got the bones out all right! Then—I went home to saw some wood, the saw slipped and cut those fingers off!"

Jubal reddened.

"Next time you go into a menagerie you try it," said the man, "and see how easy 'tis to put your hand into the cage and get the bones out. No danger in it 'tall. 'Twas the pesky old buck saw made my hand this way."

"But you've traveled a good deal?" said Jack, coming to Jubal's help.

"Yes, a good deal. I reckon I've traveled from this wharf to my house over there more'n a million times. If you'll step this way a little you can see the sawbuck where I cut these fingers off. Right this—"

But Jack and Jubal were moving on.

"Sold!" said Jack.

"Sold the wust kind," Jubal admitted. "I'd like tew go back an' lick him. He keyed me away up, and then let me fall down like a wet fish—kerslap!"

As they passed along, a head was poked out from an interstice in the lumber pile, and the eyes in that head glared at them. It was the head of the tramp who had been on the island in the Malapan.

"So youse have follered me here, eh?" he grunted, his face working with almost insane fury. "Pertendin'

ter talk ter people on de wharf, yit lookin' fer me. Well, I'll settle youse!"

When Jack and Jubal had passed on a distance from him he wriggled out of the hole in which he had been concealed and crept after them with stealthy steps.

Jubal's hotel was near the wharves—a boarding house rather than a regular hotel, with a wooden L to it, in which was Jubal's sleeping room. This L was two stories high, and Jubal's room was on the upper floor. Some other members of the Cranford nine also had rooms there."

"Puttin' up dere, eh, like a swell cove, eh?"

The tramp's eyes glittered.

"Well, I'll git even wit youse!"

Unaware that the tramp was anywhere near, Jack and Jubal went on from the hotel into the town, where they encountered some of their friends.

The tramp retreated and again took refuge in the hole in the lumber pile.

CHAPTER VI.

JACK LIGHTFOOT'S PERIL.

Kate Strawn, Nellie Conner and some more of the Cranford girls had come over to Tidewater, being as anxious as the boys to spend an afternoon by the sea-shore.

Mrs. Strawn, Kate's mother, had come with them as chaperon. She was a lady who was just a bit haughty, proud of her possessions, of her position in society, and very proud of Brodie and Kate.

Some friends of the girls, coming from the city, were expected on the ten-o'clock boat, and Mrs. Strawn had planned to go with the girls down to the wharf to meet these friends.

But at the last moment a furious headache made it impossible for Mrs. Strawn to accompany the girls, and they were to go with some one from the hotel.

This did not suit Kate Strawn.

"We'll go out on the street and see if some of the boys aren't near—some of the Cranford boys," said Kate. "I don't want to go down to the wharf with that horrid clerk from the hotel."

So Kate and the girls went out upon the street in

front of the hotel, hoping to see some boy or man from Cranford whom they knew.

Jack Lightfoot had passed by but a few minutes before, on his way to the wharves.

Jack knew that the steamer was soon due, and he rather expected some friends on it himself.

He was ahead of time, though not so very much.

If he had dreamed that the girls from Cranford wanted to go down to meet the steamer he would have stopped for them.

He did not know, and went on, to encounter a peril of which he did not dream.

The tramp had been lurking about the wharves all day, hoping for an opportunity to slip into the hold of some vessel, or play stowaway in some manner, and thus get safely out of Tidewater.

He believed he was being pursued, and the idea had taken deep root in his mind.

When he beheld Jack and Jubal there that afternoon he was sure they had followed him to that spot and were looking for him, and only wanted to know where he was to arrest him.

The body of the man who had fallen from the steamer in the Malapan River—the owner of the dog—and had been drowned, had drifted against some willows on the shore of the island, where it had been found by this tramp, who had rifled the pockets of their contents, took the man's watch, and had then set the body adrift again, letting it pass out to sea with the tide.

Because of this—he had disposed of the watch to a crooked pawnbroker in Tidewater—the tramp was in deadly fear of the law. He had never been quite sure that in his work of rifling the body and turning it adrift in the river he had not been seen. If seen, there seemed to him a good chance that he might be arrested even on the serious charge of murder. And he held a healthy dread of prisons, for he had been sent up more than once and had a police record.

His cruelty to the dog on the island had been largely due to this fear. He would not take the dog to the mainland, lest he should be seen with the animal—the property of the dead man—and so bring suspicion on himself.

That was, likewise, the thing that had increased his

cruel treatment of the dog. Fearing to take the dog to the mainland, he also disliked having the animal with him, or near him, and whenever it came near he beat it or pelted it with sticks and stones.

The tramp had crawled from the niche in the lumber pile and was looking about, like the night bird he was, wondering what he had better do, and when he would be able to get away from Tidewater in safety on some ship, at the same time thinking of Jack and the Cranford boys, whom he was fully persuaded were in Tidewater for no other purpose than bringing about his arrest.

As he stood thus, blinking owlishly in the darkness, he saw Jack Lightfoot come walking toward the wharves on his way, early, to meet the boat from the city.

"'Ere he comes!" the tramp whispered to himself, ducking down out of sight. "Now, wot's he lookin' fer? He's a bold un, to be comin' down 'ere at dis time o' night. Wonder how I kin fix 'im?"

He looked about, like a rat seeking a place of refuge, while Jack walked thoughtlessly on, at an easy, swinging walk, whistling as he came.

Jack was in the best of spirits that night.

The Cranford nine was never, it seemed to him, in better fighting trim, and he therefore was building strong hopes on a great baseball victory the following day.

The nine was, for a time at least, harmonious, too, and that was a thing for congratulation; since sometimes they warred among themselves in a most unpleasant manner.

It had been arranged that Jack and Phil Kirtland were to constitute the battery, Jack to pitch and Kirtland to catch—this arrangement being made largely to please and mollify Kirtland.

Lafe, the former catcher, was to be in the infield.

Reliable old Lafe didn't care where he played. All he was anxious about was to bring victory to the nine. If Lafe had a serious fault it was a lack of personal ambition. He never seemed to care whether he accomplished anything himself. If he could have an easy time and plenty of apples to eat when apples were scarce, peanuts would do—he was willing that anybody who desired it might have the glory, and the

honor. Yet he was ready to do anything for Jack, and for Cranford.

So Jack was feeling in a most excellent humor that night, as he took his way, whistling, down to the wharves.

The hobo had wriggled into the shadows of the lumber pile, and lay there like a disreputable toad burrowing in the darkness.

When Jack came opposite the tramp's hiding place a billet of wood shot through the air.

It struck Jack heavily on the shoulder and knocked him down.

Before he could rise, the tramp was on him.

"Ah!" the rascal snarled, much as if he were a dog, for the exclamation gurgled from his hairy throat like a growl. "I've got youse now, and don't youse fer git it!"

His hand went into his pocket and brought a section of tarry rope which he had found that day lying by the lumber pile.

With this he began to tie Jack's hands, working quickly.

Jack came to himself while this was going on, and was about to attack the tramp, blindly, of course, for he hardly knew what had happened to him, when the fellow struck him a violent blow in the neck that almost snapped it, and reduced him again to a state of instant helplessness.

"We'll call dat de jiu-jitsu knockout!" the tramp gurgled, laughing horribly. "I remember de time w'en I climbed to de top of yer ole gym and see youse fellers monkeyin' wit de jiu-jit, an' talkin' 'bout it. I guess youse ain't rememberin' anyting now. But I do."

He chuckled as he fixed the knots to his satisfaction, and then, taking a dirty stick, made a gag with it and a section of the tarry rope, and pressed this between Jack's jaws.

The pain brought Jack back to a state of consciousness.

He did not even yet know just what had befallen him. It seemed to him that a section of the sky must have dropped as he was on his way to the wharf, or that a mast of one of the schooners had struck him.

But this attempt to get that dirty and painful gag in his mouth was enough to convince him that he was

not dealing with anything so impersonal as a mast or the sky.

He knew that he was in the power of some man, and instinct told him that the party was an enemy and his danger deadly.

He tried to spring to his feet, but with a touch of his filthy hands the tramp rolled him over on his back.

"Lay dere, till I gits ready to have youse move!"

The voice and the dialect told Jack who his enemy was.

It is not derogatory to his character for high courage and even heroic bravery to say that a great wave of fear swept through Jack Lightfoot, causing his whole body to tremble.

He tried to speak, or to cry out, but the gag prevented.

His wheezing attempts to speak were amusing to the tramp.

"Dis is wot yer gits fer follerin' me, see! An' it'll be worse'n dis fer youse 'fore I gits t'rough."

He grabbed Jack by the shoulder, even while Jack struggled and panted vainly, and with a rough motion drew him over to the great pile of lumber, which was here heaped up as a cargo for some vessel.

Going to the hole in which he had hidden all day, the tramp drew Jack into it, and cast him down on the hard boards with as much unconcern as if he were dumping a bag of grain there.

The groan that broke from Jack as he fell was music to the ears of the tramp. He laughed like a fiend when he heard it.

"Youse'll be gruntin' worse'n dat 'fore I'm t'rough!" he said.

He disappeared, leaving Jack lying helplessly in the dark hole.

In a minute he was back, dragging a keg of turpentine with him.

He stove in the head of the keg with an ax that he found, and was about to draw it up into the niche and pour the contents over Jack, when some one coming frightened him.

But he tipped the keg over, on the end of the lumber pile, threw some straw hastily together, scraping it from the ground, and then, scratching a match, tossed it into the pile of straw.

He was running for some point of safety before the match ignited the straw.

But before he had gone far the straw caught, and, flashing its fire to the turpentine, the whole lumber pile seemed to leap into sudden flame.

CHAPTER VII.

HEROIC GIRLS.

The sounds of approaching footsteps, which had frightened away the tramp, were made by the girls, Kate Strawn, Nellie Conner, and some of the other girls, who were now coming down to the wharves.

They had not found any of the Cranford boys to act as escort, but they had heard the steamer whistle, and had seen her flashing lights as she turned the point of the island out in the harbor and came toward the landing.

The sight of those lights and the scream of the whistle had emboldened the girls to try to go to the landing without an escort.

"There'll be no danger now," said Kate, who was naturally bold and courageous. "I don't think mother would care now, when we can see the steamer coming."

So they had run down from the hotel through the quiet street into the darkness that held sway amid the gloomy buildings by the water side.

As they came thus, hurrying along, the fire kindled by the tramp flashed up, illuminating everything, glaring red in their faces and making their forms seem fire-touched figures in some picture of an inferno.

They screamed and ran back a few steps.

"Oh, dear me!" cried Kate.

"What could have started that fire?" Nellie demanded, not expecting an answer.

"It's going to burn that lumber," said one of the other girls.

"And these houses, too!" cried another.

"And if we don't hurry past it we can't get to the dock!"

"If we get to the dock, can we get back?" said Nellie.

It will be recalled that Jack had gained full consciousness, but had been tied fast and tight by the fiendish tramp, and also gagged.

Therefore, he saw that flash of fire, and knew the fate to which the devil in human form had consigned him.

He knew it was the same tramp that he and Tom had captured on the island—he had seen and heard enough for that; and, therefore, he knew this had been done by the scoundrel for revenge.

He writhed in an agony of apprehension, when he beheld the fire and heard its roar.

The sweat came out on him until it saturated his clothing.

He struggled to rise to his feet, to crawl out of that horrible death trap, only to find that the tramp had tied him fast to the boards, in addition to binding his hands and feet.

He fell back with a groan.

Then he began, in a fury of despair, to tug and strain at the cords that held him. They cut into his wrists, but he did not desist.

He tried to shout for help.

The flames leaped toward the sky, making so great a roaring that he did not hear the talk of the girls, who had now come upon the scene.

In his agony Jack flung himself to and fro, while the heat of the fire beat in his face and seemed to burn through his staring eyes down into his very brain.

Again and again he tried to scream, when he saw the flames coming toward him.

He frantically rubbed his mouth against the boards at his side.

Then—joy!

He slipped one end of the gag stick out of the noose that held it.

He was not free, but now he could give tongue, and his scream rang as a wild shriek of agonizing demand for help.

The girls, crowded together and discussing the fire, heard it.

It fell on their ears like the yell of some fiend imprisoned in the heart of the flame.

"Oh, let us run!" said one of the girls.

"No," said Kate, resolutely.

"No," declared Nellie, as courageous now when she thought some one was in peril; "that was a call for help."

They approached the fire as near as they could and heard that scream ring out again and again.

"Oh, why don't some one come?" cried the girls in a breath.

"Perhaps we can go to the other end of the lumber pile and see what it is, or who it is," Nellie suggested.

"Yes," said Kate, instantly; "let's go!"

Nellie and Kate ran round the now blazing lumber, hearing those cries of agony as they ran; and, coming to the other end, found that the fire was confined still to the end nearest the town.

"I'm going up there," said Kate, with determination, as that cry again came.

"Hark! Doesn't it sound like a voice you know?" asked Nellie.

But Kate was climbing as sturdily as any boy to the top of the lumber pile.

Nellie followed her, but was shaking so that she slipped back almost as fast as she tried to get onward.

Mounting to the top of the pile, Kate Strawn was given a view of the fire-lighted buildings, and of the narrow, dark street that led from the larger street down to the wharves.

In that street she beheld some men and boys coming at a run.

Then she heard in the town wild cries of "Fire! fire!" and the clanging of an alarm bell.

The screams for help were coming in wild tones, and Kate, without waiting for assistance from anyone, ran along the top of the lumber pile, where she was outlined in red by the fire light, and, gaining the center of the pile, found a hole, or crevice, and from this came the sounds.

She reeled and almost fell in a frightened half faint, when it seemed to her that the voice she heard was Jack Lightfoot's.

Jack, down in the hole, unable to break the cords that held him, beheld her there, illuminated by the flames, an angelic figure, it seemed to him, against the smoky background of the sky.

"Kate!" he called. "Get help! I'm down here, and I can't—can't get out!"

Get help? That would have taken time, and Kate saw that in a minute the fire would eat to that spot.

It was rapidly throwing its long, red flames up and over the lumber as if reaching out to drag her down.

There was no time to get help. Whatever was to be done must be done at once.

Turning, she saw that Nellie was at her heels, for Nellie had also clambered up on the lumber and followed her courageous friend.

"It's Jack!" screamed Kate, hysterically.

To Nellie Conner the thing seemed impossible, yet it set every nerve in her body to shaking.

In an instant she knew it was true; for she, too, heard Jack call out, telling them to get help.

"I'm going down," said Kate, bracing herself on the edge of the hole—this hole being between two lumber piles, and inclosed at either end by more lumber and some crossed sticks.

She swung over, and began to climb down, setting her feet in between the boards.

Nellie stood on the edge of the hole, in trembling uncertainty, wondering if she would have time to summon help.

Then she heard Kate's voice—Kate, who had reached Jack, and was speaking to him.

"In my pocket," said Jack, gasping—"my knife! In the right-hand pocket!"

Kate burrowed with willing fingers for the knife.

"Now," Jack was gasping, "cut the cords—on my wrists!"

She obeyed with shaking fingers, her hands, so that it seemed she could never sever the cords.

She was trembling all over with the tremendous excitement and the startling nature of the whole thing.

But she cut the cords!

"Now, that other one," said Jack. "But—no, give me the knife! I can use it now!"

He reached round beneath him, and cut the cords that held him bound to the boards.

Then he slashed away those that held his feet.

"Climb up!" he shouted.

Down in that hole the heat was becoming like a furnace and the smoke choking.

Kate felt her face burning with the scorching heat and was almost afraid that her clothing was on fire.

She tried to obey, setting her trembling hands on the boards.

Jack scrambled up.

A tongue of the flame seemed blown from the fire straight over their heads like a great, red blanket.

Kate screamed, as it seemed to strike at her, and, falling back, was caught in Jack's arms.

On the top of the pile Nellie Conner also screamed, for the flame almost reached her.

She ran back a few steps, but returned instantly, and began to shout down into the hole.

"Yes, I'm coming!" said Jack, his lips and tongue and jaws seeming too stiff for use.

He was coming, with Kate Strawn held in his arms.

She had fainted. Overcome by terror, by her exertions, and by the sight of that swinging flame, she had tumbled back, and would have dashed against the boards if Jack had not caught her and saved her from the fall.

And now he was mounting with her in his arms.

Kate Strawn was no light weight, even if she was a girl.

She was not of the heavy build of her brother Brodie, but, being an active, athletic, outdoor type of girl, her body had weight and, lying now limp in Jack's arms, he found it a heavy burden.

But he would save the girl who had done all she could to save him, or he would die in the effort.

So he held her against his shoulder with one hand, and setting the fingers of his other hand, and his feet, between the boards, he mounted, painfully and slowly.

As he reached the top, where Nellie had remained sturdily to give him assistance, that tongue of flame again leaped along the top of the pile of lumber, seeming to lick their very faces.

But Jack drew Kate to the top, and there he and Nellie carried her over the heated boards, away from the fire and to the end of the pile.

There was a great shouting now going on, and girls on the ground were screaming.

The steamer was coming up to its dock, using its whistle in a series of wild shrieks that pierced to the remotest part of the town; and this, together with the clang of the fire bell, tumbled the sleepiest citizen out of his bed.

And now some boys came running round the lumber

pile, and rushing up to the little group there, they helped Jack and Kate and Nellie to the ground.

Kate was assisted into the building on the steamer's dock, where she quickly revived.

Jack and Nellie hung over her in anxiety until they saw her look up and smile.

Jack knew he could never thank her enough, neither could he ever sufficiently thank Nellie Conner; but he tried to make them understand how he felt.

"Wouldn't you have done that for us?" said Kate, in a quite matter-of-fact way.

"A dozen times over, if it needed to be done!"

"I thought so. And we've done no more than anyone would have done. But I tell you I was scared!"

"Scared! I was frightened to death," said Nellie.

She still looked it, being even paler and more agitated than Kate herself.

"I wonder how we're ever to get away from here?" said Nellie. "The fire is between us and the street."

"We can go in a boat, if we have to," said Kate. "Dear me, how my head aches! It's about to split. I wonder if there's some water here?"

"I'll get some," said Jack. "I should have thought of it before."

And he went in search of water, though he was hardly at the moment able to walk.

"I want to get word to some officer to look out for that tramp," he said, when he came back, and explained to them how the whole thing had come about, so far as he understood it, and of his recognition of his assailant as the tramp.

"He ought to be found and arrested," said Kate.

"He will be sent to the penitentiary, if the officers can lay hands on him," was Jack's angry declaration.

CHAPTER VIII.

BEFORE THE GAME.

Fate seemed to have a grudge against the Cranford nine.

In attempting to subdue the fire and confine it to the lumber pile, where it had started, several members of the nine, who had joined with the fire company and the townspeople in the fire fighting, were more or less injured.

Though these injuries were of a comparatively trivial character, they were at the time a very serious thing, for they rendered the team less effective as a playing force, called to do battle against one of the best nines in that section of country, the Tidewater Tigers.

Tom had received pinched fingers, when some boards he was trying to lift had dropped down on them, so that he could hardly catch or hold a ball thrown to him; and Phil Kirtland had been so badly lamed that he had a stiff shoulder and arm.

That last was a lamentable thing, for it broke the battery.

Nor was Jack himself in fit condition to play ball, after the terrible experiences he had been through.

And now, when it had been arranged that Lafe was to catch in his old position, Lafe was knocked out, during some practice work, just before the opening of the game, by a bat which, slipping from the hands of a careless batter, came end-on and struck him full in the stomach, laying him out on the grass for a time like a dead man.

Though Lafe recovered from this, he was too weak and sick to attempt to go behind the bat.

Truly, hard luck was fighting the Cranford nine with a vengeance.

On the other hand, the Tidewater Tigers were in the pink of condition, apparently, as their practice work showed.

None of them had reached the fire until it was well subdued, so had not been tempted to undertake any personal risk in fighting it.

Jack Lightfoot had a very serious fit of the blues, when the time for the game was not ten minutes away.

He was subject to these periods of despondency and fear of failure.

Sometimes in his lessons and examinations in the high school he "fell down," for no other reason than that he was sure, beforehand, that he would.

And in athletics it had been the same way.

There were two serious things—weaknesses, shall we call them?—against which Jack Lightfoot had to fight strenuously.

One was this tendency to doubt his ability and fear failure in advance, and the other was a temper that

sometimes flashed to a white heat almost before he knew it and made him do things of which he was afterward ashamed.

Fortunately, Jack had come to recognize these things as his weaknesses, and had begun to fight them with all the strength of his will.

So now, seeing the condition of himself and the nine, and feeling that old mood of hesitation and despondency come over him, which made him want to say "It's no use!" he braced himself against it and tried to crowd it down.

To help him do this, he began to recall the many times he had felt thus, and then by bracing himself had gone to victory. He resolutely refused to think of the times when he had failed.

The thought brought encouragement and rekindled hope. With the exception of this one tendency, he was naturally hopeful and optimistic. Only in periods of depression was he otherwise.

As he thought of the victories which his team had gained on the diamond—two victories already over this crack nine, the Tidewater Tigers alone—his courage revived.

He began to feel that it would be disgraceful for the Cranford nine to even dream for a moment, before the game was called, that they could not win.

He saw the Cranford girls seated in the grand stand, surrounding Nellie and Kate and Mrs. Strawn, bearing their little flags, which they were ready to shake out and wave whenever the Cranford boys, by clever work, gave the opportunity.

He saw the mob of Cranford rooters who had come over expressly to cheer and put heart and fire into the Cranford team.

In spite of what the girls had been through the previous evening, they appeared bright-faced and cheerful now, and the Cranford yells were already beginning to make themselves heard.

A great crowd was streaming into the ball grounds and mounting to the bleachers and grand stand.

The diamond was on level ground facing the bay, a sightly situation, giving a view of the blue waters and the sailing craft, with far out the trailing smoke of passing steamers.

The afternoon was perfect.

Jack's heart lightened and his face brightened.

"Fellows, we've got to win!" he said, going among the nine and the substitutes. "We can do it, in spite of everything."

They cheered up visibly at his words.

Lafe lay in the benches, groaning; yet he, too, tried to smile.

"I'm afraid I'm out of it, Jack," he said. "Sorry, old boy; I wouldn't have had this happen for a fortune."

Jack said something to Jubal, and Jubal smiled, expanding his homely face.

"Yeou bet I'll do the best I kin," he promised.

"Jubal will go behind the bat," Jack announced, "And now we'll make up the batting list, with such changes as are made necessary by what has happened."

His courage came back still more as he began to plan for the game, and heard the Cranford fans open out with a cheer and a revised version of Yale's famous Boola Song:

"Well, here we are; well, here we are!
Just watch us rolling up a score.
We'll leave those fellows behind so far
They won't want to play us any more.
We've hope and faith in Cranford true;
To win we cannot fail.
Well, a boola, boo; boola, boola, boo;
Bool, boo, boola, 'oola, boola, boo."

CHORUS.

"Bool, boola, boola, boola,
Bool, boola, boola, boola.
When we're through with these poor fellows,
They will holler boola, boo."

"Now, isn't it a shame; now, isn't it a shame,
To do those fellows up so bad?
We've done it before, we can do it once more,
Though they'll feel very, very sad.
We'll roll up a score so very high,
That you will hear them sigh:
'Bool, boola, boo; boola, boola, boo;
Bool, boo; boola, 'oola, boola, boo!'

CHORUS.

"Bool, boola," etc.

"Hear that?" said Jack, as the song rang out. "We've done it before, we can do it once more!" I'm sure we can, fellows, and the Cranford people are expecting us to. Here's the batting list for the use of the umpire, and now we'll do some warming-up work."

CHAPTER IX.

ON THE DIAMOND.

The game was on, and the excitement of the spectators was at white heat.

The batting lists stood thus:

TIDEWATER.

Ben Bartlett, rf.
Ben Talbot, ss.
Kid Casey, p.
Silas Cross, 1st b.
Jim Lane, c.
Paul Lockwood, lf.
Sidney Talbot, cf.
Joe Bowers, 3d b.
Mason King, 2d b.

CRANFORD.

Tom Lightfoot, 2d b.
Brodie Strawn, 1st b.
Mack Remington, rf.
Jack Lightfoot, p.
Jubal Marlin, c.
Phil Kirtland, 3d b.
Wilson Crane, cf.
Ned Skeen, ss.
Connie Lynch, lf.

The score was five to two against them, and the sixth

The Cranford nine was playing in hard luck. inning was being played.

Yet the Cranford fans continued to cheer at every favorable opportunity, and rolled out the Boola Song with much enthusiasm.

And now, with Cranford at the bat, in the last half of the sixth, Brodie Strawn had cracked out a three-bagger, bringing a runner home and taking himself to third.

The Cranford fans howled in jubilation, for the score was now three to five.

"Just keep the ginger bottle circulating," said Jack. "That was hot stuff. Brodie is all right."

Mack Remington came to the bat; but two men were out.

Kid Casey, "the Wizard Pitcher of the Four-Town League," twisted the soiled sphere in across the plate.

Mack Remington did not like the looks of that kink, and had a strike called.

"Pap says that it's no use going for a thing unless you can get it," he grumbled, in justification.

Brodie was playing off third, watching for a chance to come home.

With two men out, the position was ticklish.

When the next ball came in from the wizard pitcher, Mack thought he had puzzled out the kink in the delivery. He snapped up a fly, which the redoubtable Casey caught easily, and the side was out.

"But we got a run!" said Jack, encouragingly.

And, in consideration of that run, the Boola Song bellowed forth again.

Jack tried to forget his stiffness and lameness, the result of his terrible experiences of the preceding night, and sent in the ball from the box with all of his ability.

But the man behind the batters, though doing his best, was not Lafe Lampton nor Phil Kirtland. It troubled Jubal to hold Jack's swift delivery.

Kirtland had done poor work in his position at third, for his sore shoulder made him cautious, and often unable to hold the ball when it came swiftly.

Lafe still lay groaning in the benches, his face white and his whole body sick. But he watched the game with keen interest.

Jack had to slow his pace to suit Jubal's ability as a catcher, and the Tigers put two men on the bases, one at first and one at third.

Then Jubal let a ball pop out of his mitt and go twisting toward the bleachers.

While he was getting it the man on third came home and the man on first went to second.

"Great hemlocks!" Jubal sputtered.

"You couldn't catch a cold!" some one shouted at him.

"By granny, that's right," Jube admitted. "If a cold should come and step ontew me I wouldn't even know it was raound."

He threw the ball to Jack.

Jack struck out one man, Tom caught out one, and Phil Kirtland, forgetting his sore shoulder, slammed a hot liner to first and succeeded in putting a man out there.

The score was six to three against Cranford.

The first half of the seventh inning opened, with the Tidewater Tigers at the bat.

Jack tried the spit ball, as he had tried it before.

But the spit ball troubled Jubal as much as Jack's lightning delivery.

"I reckon I'll have tew give up," said Jubal, coming down for a word with Jack.

"No, stick to it; you're not doing bad."

"But I am, by granny! It's me that's a-goin' tew lose this game."

"I'll try to accommodate my delivery to you."

Jubal went again behind the bat.

The Tidewater fans were joyous and howling.

Seeing that Jube could not hold safely either the spit ball or the swift delivery, Jack sent in a slow teaser, which hung tantalizingly in the air, then shot downward just as it neared the bat.

It seemed an "easy" ball, and the batter smashed at it as if he meant to drive it into deep center.

But—he struck over it, much to his surprise.

"One strike!" said the umpire.

Jubal held this ball, all right.

Jack tried it again.

"Two strikes!"

Again it came in, but with a side twist instead of a drop, and again the batter was fooled.

"Three strikes."

How the Cranfordites yelled!

Looking into the grand stand, Jack saw that the girls had descended to seats near the ground, for some reason, and he also observed the dog, Rex, barking in front of them, excited by the cheering.

Kate had said she would take Rex to all the baseball games, and he was here.

Jack smiled, as he saw Rex jumping and barking, and the girls fluttering their little flags.

The next man at the bat seemed to throw himself deliberately into the ball, but the umpire gave him first.

When the soiled globe twisted again across the plate Jubal let it get away from him, and the base runner took second.

Again the batter fanned, again the ball found a hole in Jubal's mitt, and the runner went to third.

Putting his speed low again, to accommodate Jubal, Jack was hit for a two-bagger, which brought the runner safely home.

Then Tom, whose hands were hurting him, failed to put the runner out at third on a steal, and Phil Kirtland, at third, did the same thing and let him go home.

The Tigers had pulled in two runs, and the score was eight to three.

"Oh! you fellows are sewed up in a bag!" some one shouted.

Jack did not think so—was determined not to think so; but before three men were out the Tigers had another run, making the score nine to three.

CHAPTER X.

THE CYCLONE FINISH.

Jubal came to the bat, being first up.

He swung two bats, one of them being Old Wagon Tongue.

The lighter bat he cast away, and faced the pitcher left-handed.

Jubal always troubled Kid Casey, because of that habit of his of batting left-handed.

"By gravy, I ain't sayin' what I kin do, but I'll do the best that's in me."

"Just remember that a South-Paw is a lucky fellow!" called Jack. "Then you can't miss it."

However, Jubal did miss it, twice in succession.

The "Wizard Pitcher" smiled.

"Oh, these Cranfords are easy to-day," he said to himself. "I guess we'll have to tangle them up in some sort of an old lumber fire whenever they come up here to play us; it's simply knocked them silly. They were wonders the last time; now they're N. G."

He wound up again to send the ball to Jubal.

"Pap says that if a feller just thinks he can do a thing, pretty often he can," said apple-cheeked Mack Remington, pitching this sage advice to Jubal.

It seemed effective advice.

Anyway, Jubal connected with the sphere this time, somewhat to Kid Casey's astonishment, and slammed the ball out for a double.

Phil Kirtland's stiff shoulder seemed to be better, for he singled and brought Jubal to third.

Then Jubal came home on a little tip that Wilson Crane got.

Wilson knocked the ball down toward first, and was out himself, for the first baseman, instead of cutting off Jubal, or even trying to, had it in for Wilson.

The score was now four to nine.

Ned Skeen hammered out a fly.

Failing to hold his base on this fly—for he thought the infielder would not get it—Kirtland was unable to get back and went out, and the side was out.

Seven innings had been played, and the score was nine to four against Cranford.

"Now, give 'em all they're looking for," said Jim Lane, the captain of the Tigers, as the Tigers went to bat.

"Hit 'em up!" some excited Tidewater enthusiast yelled from the bleachers.

Twice Tidewater had gone down before Cranford, and it was a great gratification for the Tidewater people the way this game was proceeding.

Again a batter seemed to jump into one of Jack's slow-delivered pitches, and was passed to first.

Joe Bowers was at the bat. He was a good batter, and in the game played before on these grounds he had pitched through several innings for Tidewater.

"Hit her out, Joey!" said Lane.

Jack sent the ball in, and Joe Bowers smashed at it.

"One strike!"

Jack was getting back into form, and if only Jubal could have held him things would have been different. Though still sore and somewhat lame from his experiences at the time of the fire, Jack was disregarding all these things now and working as if he had never been in better condition.

That was one of the good traits of Jack Lightfoot's disposition. He had his weak ones, as we have seen, but when he had once gone into a battle, he cast everything aside but the fight that he was in, and left nothing undone that would help to bring victory.

And so it was now.

Jubal fumbled a ball, and the runner on first tried to reach second.

Jubal scooped the ball from the ground and sent it flying; and Jack, catching it, for it came to him, swung round, letting the ball slip out of his fingers as he swung, and put the runner out.

But before the side was out two runs had been made.

The Cranfords equaled this in the second half of the inning, and went one run better.

Still, when the inning was ended—it was the eighth inning—the score looked very bad for Cranford.

It was Tidewater eleven, Cranford seven.

Then the Tidewater Tigers came again to the bat, in the first half of the ninth.

Lafe Lampton rolled off of the coat, where he had been for some time lying, by the benches.

"We've got to pull this game out of the fire," he said to Jack. "You and I can do it, and I know it, and I'm going behind the bat."

"But you're not able!" Jack protested; though nothing would have pleased him better.

"That's for me to say. I'm able to do it."

"But you're sick."

"I've felt better, yes; still I'm going behind the bat."

The boys gathered round heroic Lafe.

They saw that his fair cheeks were rather white, and he did not seem in good shape.

"By granny, won't anything make me feel better than to git aout of that position," said Jubal, without the least thought that he was being displaced.

Jubal had imbibed a good deal of Jack Lightfoot's

spirit; he wanted Cranford to win, regardless of himself.

When Lafe went behind the bat, a great yell of joy and delight rolled up from the Cranford fans.

"Now we'll see something doing!" they declared.

"Take it steady, old boy, if you do go in!" Jack had said to Lafe.

And Lafe had returned:

"Send 'em in hot as you can—any old way—you'll find me there."

Jack now sent them in.

He wound up with the spit ball, and sent three straight over the rubber, and the first batter fanned out.

Then Jack was confronted by the "Wizard Pitcher," Kid Casey.

"I'll do it again!" was Jack's determined thought.

He signaled to Lafe that he would send another spit ball.

It came in, and—the mighty Casey fanned!

When the previous game was played on this diamond Jack had struck Casey out.

"He's going to try it again, now that he's got somebody that can hold him!" was Casey's uncomfortable reflection. "Well, I won't let him!"

But—

"Two strikes!" said the umpire, as another ball twisted over the plate.

The next seemed a wide ball, and Casey did not swing at it.

Jack was sure that it had cut the corner of the rubber.

The umpire hesitated. He was a fair man, but he was in doubt.

"One ball!" he sung out.

Jack tried a hot drop.

The umpire thought it was too low, and Casey thought so, too, for he did not try for it.

"Two balls!"

In another minute or so it was three balls and two strikes.

The spectators almost held their breath, as Jack was seen to wind up again.

He had flushed and braced himself for the final effort, and Lafe, having seen his signal, was ready for it—the spit ball.

If it broke away from Jack and went wild?

But—

The Wizard Pitcher smashed at it as if he meant to send it into the bay, and—

"Three strikes—out!"

Then the heartless fans from Cranford began to

sing that famous song which tells how "Mighty Casey has struck out!"

Two men were out.

Not a man had reached first.

Having ended "Casey," the fans opened up on the Boola Song:

"We've done it before, we can do it once more!"

Following Casey at the bat came Silas Cross, who, after two strikes, secured a little single.

Then up came the captain of the Tidewater nine, Jim Lane, who was also catcher, and a mighty good player in any position.

"One strike!"

Jim Lane looked at his bat in disgust.

Some humorous Cranford rooter yelled to him to "go get a tennis racket."

That unkindly cut seemed to nerve Lane. He stiffened and braced himself for the next.

He let one ball go by, then smashed at the next one with a do-or-die air, and missed again.

Now he trembled.

This was the last chance of the team to do anything in that inning.

Silas Cross, who had gone to first, had not been able to get any further.

The ball came in—the eccentric and unreliable spit ball.

Swish!

It was a clean miss.

"Three strikes—side's out!" said the umpire.

The score was still—Tidewater eleven, Cranford seven.

Yet in the ninth the Tidewaters had brought in not a single run, after reliable old Lafe went behind the batters.

"Now, we'll hit it up!" said Jack, filled with enthusiasm. "We've got only four runs to make to tie the thing, and if we can get five we win."

He spoke as if four runs were nothing at all, he was so light-hearted.

He inspired the nine with his own enthusiasm.

To have seen Lafe go behind the bat and catch with as much fire and vim as if he were in tiptop condition was an inspiring sight, anyway.

Tom Lightfoot, one of the best batsmen of the nine, came first now, thus bringing the head of the batting list up again.

Neither Lane nor Casey were feeling good over the way their nine had been retired in the first half.

Tom Lightfoot led off with a double to left, the fielder just failing to get under the ball.

Then the batting slugger, Brodie Strawn, followed with a liner for two bases, scoring Tom Lightfoot.

"Mack, you can do it," said Jack, encouragingly, as Mack Remington took up "Old Wagon Tongue."

Macklin's apple-red cheeks were even redder with excitement and desire.

"Pap says that if a fellow thinks he can do a thing that's pretty good proof that he can."

"Well, just believe that you can, then," said Jack.

"I'm going to. Pap says——"

The ball was coming in.

Whether Mack's "belief" helped him or not, he put Brodie Strawn on third, but by a sacrifice.

Jack Lightfoot came to the bat.

The fans stood up in the bleachers and cheered.

The girls from Cranford were also standing up, as Jack could see, and he heard the loud barking of Rex.

Jack's heart quickened its beats.

Often a demonstration of this kind, at a critical moment, is not a good thing.

But Jack turned from it and gave his whole attention to the "Wizard Pitcher," who was winding up and was determined to strike him out.

Jack, knowing how much depended on him, was cautious, and had a strike called and let two balls pass that were "balls."

Then he hammered the ball for three bases down the right line, bringing the fans to their feet again, for that scored Brodie Strawn.

Lafe Lampton came to the bat; but his white face told that he was not equal to the task he was undertaking, and he asked permission of the opposing captain to have a man run the bases for him.

"Oh, you'll not even get a single," was Kid Casey's boast.

"Won't I?" said Lafe, reaching for it.

It had come straight over the plate, with a sharp curve downward.

Lafe smashed it on the nose with all his might, and sent it whistling like a cannon ball between center and left field over the head of the third baseman.

Jack came home without trouble, and Lafe gained second.

Then, as the ball seemed to be lost, Lafe started like a greyhound for third.

The fielders, bumping their heads together in their search for the ball, dug it out of the grass, and it came hot for third.

In the excitement of the moment it was thrown high, and the third baseman could not get it.

It hit the tip of his fingers, as he jumped for it, and he seemed to put it up into the air and onward, for it went right on.

The spectators were simply roaring.

Men and boys drummed the benches and even danced and howled as Lafe, running as no one would ever have believed he could run, came home, amid such a whirlwind burst of excitement as had never been seen on the Tidewater diamond.

The score was tied—eleven to eleven.

And no one—except, possibly, Jack and his friends—had looked for anything of the kind, after the miserable luck which Cranford had gone through.

"Now, Phil!" said Jack.

Phil Kirtland came to the bat.

This was a position that pleased Phil. It was just such a position as he would have chosen for himself if he had been given choice.

It put him right in the forefront—in the lime light.

Jack had a fear that Phil's desire to stand in the center of a halo of glory might cause him to strike out, but he was too wise to hint of such a thing; he only looked at Kirtland with some anxiety.

Kirtland's heart was beating unpleasantly fast, and his face was flushed.

He was truly a handsome boy, as he stood there waiting for the pitcher's delivery.

Phil could at times shut out from his ears the clamor of admirers and attend strictly to the work before him.

By a great effort he succeeded in doing this now.

The ball came in.

Crack!

Phil met it just right. It was a terrific hit.

Phil had never made such a hit in his life.

It went into deep left, and, bounding, rolled on to the very edge of the water of the bay.

Phil leaped for first as soon as he struck, and passing first pulled for second, and then on for third.

Jack ran down to third to coach him in.

Phil was coming toward third, while bleachers and grand stand and the whole field were acting as if the people were all crazy.

There was some marshy land down where the ball had gone, and some tufts and bunches of coarse grass.

These bothered the fielder.

Jack thought at first the fielder could not find the ball, but saw him rise out of the grass with it in his hand.

Yet the distance was great.

"Go!" Jack shouted. "Don't stop! He can't get it in! Go!"

And Phil went past third without once turning his head, for he knew that he could rely on Jack's word and judgment.

The ball came whistling in—a splendid throw—but the distance was great—and before it was in the hands of the pitcher, who had run out beyond short to get it, Phil Kirtland had crossed the rubber.

The score was now—twelve for Cranford and eleven for Tidewater.

And Cranford had won, after all.

Such a noise as was made by the rooters could only be compared to pandemonium.

They yelled and yelled, and then yelled again.

And, as if this were not enough, they swung their caps and hats, their handkerchiefs, their parasols and umbrellas, and gave three cheers for the Cranford nine.

And out in front of the excited people, as they thus rose up cheering and yelling and prepared to descend from their seats, Rex barked and capered, as if he were sharing their joy and knew what had caused it.

"That is what I call a cyclone finish!" said Jack Lightfoot, his heart expanding with pleasure and enjoyment and pride in the good work of his nine, Phil Kirtland included.

He was speaking to Kirtland and praising him.

"The whole thing was a cyclone finish," said Kirtland, generously.

"It's what I call pulling a game out of the fire," observed Lafe, burrowing into his pockets for a peanut.

"And you're feeling better, Lafe?" said Jack.

"Better? I'm well, it seems to me. That would have been enough to bring a dead man back to life."

Yet Lafe was still white-faced.

All about Jack and his nine swarmed the enthusiastic Cranford rooters, anxious to shake the boys by the hands and congratulate them on their great work in the ninth inning.

Truly, it had been a cyclone finish.

And truly, as Lafe had expressed it, the game had been "pulled out of the fire."

CHAPTER XI.

THE TRAMP ONCE MORE.

All this while the tramp who had sought Jack's life had been forgotten.

There had been a good deal of search for him, but the interest in the ball game had caused that to stop.

Yet all the while he had been lying under the bleachers, with some gunny bags drawn over him.

He had known nothing about the coming ball game.

Finding that he could not sneak on board any vessel, and being, besides, afraid to stay about the wharves where he concluded search would be made for him, he had taken the small store of food begged that day and not eaten, and had found, apparently, safe shelter for a time in the ball grounds under the bleachers.

He had gone to sleep there, wrapped in the gunny bags, which he had stolen in passing a warehouse.

Being lazy, and afraid to venture forth until night came again, he had been lying there when the people began to come upon the grounds.

He was afraid to try to get away from the place after that, and lay as if dead, concealed pretty well by the gunny sacks.

But as the game drew on to its cyclone finish and it was seen that it was about to end, a young man dropped from the bleachers to the ground, thinking to make his way out under the seats.

In doing so he had stumbled on the tramp, and, discovering him, had spoken to him.

The tramp felt that he could not stay there longer, for the look which the young man gave him was peculiar.

Hence he crept out from his hiding place.

In doing so he found himself in the midst of the excited crowd.

The tramp was frightened at first, when he found himself thrust into the very midst of the people he feared.

Yet he began to think that he would not be noticed.

Everyone had forgotten about him, and the talk was only of the game.

Those pushing against him and jostling seemed not to see him.

Their attention was apparently fixed on the players grouped near the bleachers.

Among those who climbed out of the lower seats of the grand stand were Mrs. Strawn and the girls who were with her.

Mrs. Strawn was swinging a black bag in her hand, which looked as if it might contain money.

She was handsomely gowned and had an air of one who was wealthy.

The tramp noticed this, and also saw the bag.

As she pushed past him, he saw an opening through the crowd whereby he thought he could escape, and reaching out his grimy hand, he snatched the bag away and leaped for safety with it.

Mrs. Strawn screamed in excitement, and some of the people near her, observing the tramp, raised a shout.

That shout attracted the attention of Jack Lightfoot, who had left his position in front of the bleachers and with some other members of the Cranford nine was pushing a way toward the Cranford friends who had so helped them by their songs and cheering.

Jack heard Mrs. Strawn cry out and caught sight of the tramp as he fled.

He saw something else, too, which stirred his pulse.

That was the collie, Rex, darting through the crowd in pursuit of the tramp.

"Don't let him escape!" Jack yelled to the people, waving his hand. "It's the tramp!"

The cry was caught up.

The crowd squirmed and, getting in the way, blocked the line of pursuit.

But Jack and his friends made their way through, while others, understanding the situation and seeing the fleeing tramp, also engaged in the chase.

Jack beheld the collie overtake the tramp and leap upon him.

He saw the tramp strike at the dog.

The dog had landed on the tramp's back.

"Hold him, Rex!" shouted Jack, as he came plunging toward the spot where the collie had overtaken the fleeing thief; "good dog, Rex! Hold him!"

Rex held on like a regular thief catcher, until Jack came up with his friends and the tramp was secured.

"What do youse want wit' me?" the fellow inquired, sullenly.

He had cast the bag aside.

"You've beer stealing—this!" said one of the boys. "We want you for attempted murder!" was Jack's harsh declaration.

Then, seeing that he was in the hands of the very boy whom he had tried to burn alive on the wharf, the tramp, in a great fright, began another struggle for liberty.

Jack threw himself on him, and, in spite of the fact that the tramp tried to draw and use a knife, he was able to hold him, with the help of some of his friends, until an officer came.

In the meantime the baseball crowd had swarmed around the prisoner.

Brodie Strawn had taken possession of the bag which had been snatched from his mother.

The tramp shivered, and a strange thrill of fear went through Jack's heart, when they heard an ominous cry from the pushing throng:

"Hang him! He's the man that set the lumber on fire!"

The tramp dropped quivering to the ground.

"I ain't!" he said, shivering. "I don't know nuttin' youse is talkin' 'bout."

"Hang him!" went up the cry again.

The tramp looked round like a trapped fox which sees the hunter approaching.

His eyes gleamed with fear, a cunning look mingling with it, as he tried to find some loophole of escape.

"Stand back!" yelled the officer, swinging his club.

But he was only one man, and many desperate men in the crowd were now trying to get at the tramp.

It is a strange thing, how in a crowd of sensible and civilized men, the old passion and lust for blood will sometimes flame up suddenly when a possible victim is presented.

Jack Lightfoot had never heard that cry for blood before, but his keen ear recognized its deadly character. It was like the howl of a wolf that scents prey.

Jack's face whitened and something tugged at his heart.

He would infinitely have preferred the tramp to escape to have him fall into the power of a bloodthirsty mob.

The cry rose higher, while the men packed closer about the tramp and the officer.

"Stand back!" the officer cried. "This man is my prisoner, and I've got to protect him with my life if necessary."

Jack looked at the baseball boys about him.

They were all there—the whole nine, and nearly every one of the substitutes.

"Hang him!" rose the cry.

There was an agitation on the outer rim of the crowd, and the word was shouted that "Here is a rope!"

"Shall we stand by and allow this?" said Jack.

He saw a determined look in the eyes of Tom Lightfoot.

"No," said Tom, hoarsely. "It would be murder!"

"All of you," said Jack, addressing his friends, "I call on all of you—surround the officer and the prisoner."

He stepped, himself, in front of the officer, and the baseball boys of Cranford swung round, encircling the officer and the tramp.

"Move along," said Jack to the officer. "Make a start for the town and keep going!"

He moved himself, urging the officer along.

Seeing the brave stand the Cranford players had taken, a number of right-minded men came to their

aid, and formed themselves, also, as a guard round the officer and the prisoner.

The tramp had been reduced to a shaking jelly bag of fear.

His lips moved voicelessly and his eyes stared in fright.

He clung close to the officer, who had a hand on his shoulder.

"They're goin' ter hang me!" he gasped.

"Not yet!" said the officer.

Other men came, and it began to seem that there would be a battle between those who wanted to hang the tramp and those who desired to let the law take its course with him.

But the officer and his self-appointed bodyguard moving along, the crowd held back and the tramp was eventually landed in jail.

* * * * *

"Rex, old boy," said Jack, patting the head of the collie, when the Cranford contingent was ready to proceed homeward, "you've got grit of the right sort, and that pleases me!"

"I think he recognized the tramp as the one who had treated him so shamefully," said Kate Strawn.

"I feel sure that he did," added Nellie Conner. "The sight of the rascal threw him into a rage, for he growled, and when he saw him running he gave chase."

"And brought him down, didn't you, Rex, old boy?"

"He's a mascot worth having," said Phil Kirtland. "A good deal better than the parrot."

But then Phil had never liked the parrot very well, for the limit of its cheering abilities was a hurrah for Jack Lightfoot and another hurrah for Cranford. It did not hurrah for "Phil Kirtland."

Yet that was the fault of Jubal Marlin, who taught it those yells, and not the fault of the wise bird.

But memory of the parrot, all other memories, too, disagreeable and otherwise, were pretty well driven out of Phil's mind now, for he had been right in the forefront in that wonderful cyclone finish, when victory had been snatched from defeat.

And that he had been there was recognized.

Praise had been showered upon him without stint.

The reader must not think, however, that Phil did not deserve all the praise he received.

He had played a great game of ball that day, when his shoulder was so stiff and sore that, had the conditions been different, he would have declared with honest belief that he could not use his arm at all.

The chief trouble with Phil was that he liked praise too well.

But, then, what member of the Cranford nine was perfect?

Not one—not even Jack Lightfoot.

There was one boy, however, whose bearing that evening was in agreeable contrast to Phil's. He had played when he felt in worse condition than Phil.

That one was brave Lafe Lampton. He did not seek praise, nor did he avoid it. He simply laughed and munched peanuts, and declared, sagely: "Well, I wouldn't done it; but somebody had to go behind the bat, you know, who could hold Jack's swift delivery, and Phil wasn't fit; so I went. And that's all there is to it."

Yet—even Lafe was not faultless.

He was lazy, he was somewhat untidy in his appearance at times, and was prone to great carelessness. Many people said he lacked ambition.

But there were times when he would rouse himself like a lion awaking from sleep, and then Lafe was a fighter to be feared, whether that fight was baseball on the diamond or a fight of any other kind.

Altogether, Jack Lightfoot had a pretty good set of boys about him, in the nine and those acting as substitutes.

Yet Jack and his friends were simply boys, not paragons, nor angels—just human boys, with many faults and failings.

So, if sometimes these lads do things that you cannot exactly approve of, remember that they are only boys—they considered themselves young men, perhaps!—clever, brave often, trying to do right most of the time, failing to do right many times, yet always striving to be a little stronger, a little more true-hearted this week than they were last week.

They do not always accomplish it, but the fact that they try is worth something.

And what is here said of the boys can be said of the girls who come into these stories.

THE END.

Next week's issue, No. 20, will be "Jack Lightfoot in Camp; or, Young Athletes at Play in the Wilderness." You will find this a first-class story of outdoor life in the woods and in the country, where the trees are green, the birds sing and the waters sparkle. There is some fun and adventure in it, and a great deal of the charm of outdoor life in the summer. You will want to see how your friends of Cranford enjoy themselves when they take a little vacation in the woods, and if you like a rattling good story you will not be disappointed in this number.

A CHAT WITH YOU

Under this general head we purpose each week to sit around the camp fire, and have a heart-to-heart talk with those of our young readers who care to gather there, answering such letters as may reach us asking for information with regard to various healthy sports, both indoor and out. We should also be glad to hear what you think of the leading characters in your favorite publication. Besides answering the various letters and giving advice on athletics, we are publishing from week to week a short essay upon some timely topic, such as "How to pitch a drop ball," and other things that most boys desire to know, told in a manner that may be easily understood. It is the editor's desire to make this department one that will be eagerly read from week to week by every admirer of the Jack Lightfoot stories, and prove to be of valuable assistance in building up manly, healthy Sons of America. All letters received will be answered immediately, but may not appear in print under five weeks, owing to the fact that the publication must go to press far in advance of the date of issue. Those who favor us with correspondence will please bear this in mind, and exercise a little patience.

PITCHING CURVES.

In our talk on this subject last week we pointed out that the first thing any young fellow who wanted to pitch must do was to gain control of the ball, patiently studying its placing. If you have been practicing you have probably found that you can place swift balls all right, but when it comes to slow ones, you are way off. Don't let these slow balls get by you; control of the slow ball is absolutely necessary. To be able to change your pace when pitching is quite a trick, but if you can do it, you have the batter at your mercy. If you send him a hot one and then, without altering the swing of your body and the general appearance of your delivery, put in a gentle, easy, ladylike shot, he will probably calculate that the ball will reach him in about the time your first swift one came along and he will swing for a three-bagger, only to hit the air. Study the slow ball and changing your pace.

The main thing a pitcher has to do is to catch the man at the bat napping. The slow ball is an excellent trick. Then come the curves—outcurve, in-shoot, drop ball and raise ball. To pitch a good curve is as pretty a trick as a player can have, although to be able to pitch curves is not absolutely necessary in a pitcher. There are several big men in the game who never use any kind of a curve, depending on straight ball cross fire. But any boy who wants to pitch ought to know something about curves, even if he decides not to use them.

For an outcurve, grasp the ball with the first two fingers and the thumb, palm downward, like a saucer under the ball. When the ball is delivered, let it pass between the thumb and first finger; this gives the rotary motion necessary to curve the ball. In beginning do not grasp the ball too tightly, which will hinder the rotary motion. A slow curve is better for a beginner; when you get more control you can use a swifter one.

A real incurve is a natural accomplishment which few pitchers can acquire, but everyone can learn to shoot an

in-shoot which is equally effective. Grasp the ball with the first three fingers and the thumb. Unlike the outcurve, an in-shoot requires speed, so hold the ball firmly. Keep the hand upright, and when you deliver, let the ball go over the tops of the fingers with a lateral motion. Do not expect to see the ball curve; this motion is a steady inward bore which may bring the ball in only an inch or two, but it is tremendously effective.

When you can pitch a drop, you are far enough advanced to call yourself a pitcher, because pitching a drop means skill and judgment rather than a trick in handling the ball. Hold the ball exactly as described for an outcurve; use a powerful swing, and when the arm is brought up high, the back of the hand parallel with the ground, release the ball between the thumb and first finger, and at the same time pull the hand from under the ball, in this way giving to the ball precisely the same motion as that of a draw ball in billiards. When the ball is near the plate, it will unexpectedly settle, at the same time veering off toward the left-hand side of the plate. A drop ball has done more mischief with the score than any other ball a pitcher can use; it has teased more crackajacks on the plate than any other, even the much discussed "spit." If you find, however, in your practice, that this play cripples your shoulder muscles, makes you feel cramped, drop it. Your arm and shoulder are too valuable to strain them acquiring any trick, however pretty it may be.

The last variety of curve known in the game is the so-called "raise ball," a trick of delivery like the drop ball, and much harder to acquire. Instead of over the shoulder, as in the drop, the ball is sent while the hand is down near the knee, the ball slipping up over the fingers and slowly rising in its flight. The motion is not unlike that of bowling. A raise ball, too, must be a slow ball; few real raises have ever been played swift. But this is a very difficult trick, and the young player need waste little time trying to accomplish it.

In training for pitcher, the essential thing is controlling the ball. When you can do that you will gradually acquire the fancy plays which will be useful only when you are master of your tools. And always bear in mind the directions given as to care of the arm. Your arm is your bank and you must treat it well.

Next week we will discuss some lesser known features of the pitcher's work and some of the season's novelties, especially the famous "spit."

I have been reading ALL-SPORTS from the first number, and I think they are the best weeklies published. I think that the baseball stories are all right, and I hope Mr. Stevens gives us more of them. I am glad to see he does not believe in jiu-jitsu. We have a little gymnasium ourselves and we tried jiu-jitsu, but it wouldn't work. We have organized ourselves into a Jack Light-

foot club. We have ALL-SPORTS in our gym. to read every week. We are going to organize a baseball team, and we are getting many valuable hints from "A Chat With You" and the stories. Hoping you will always continue to publish ALL-SPORTS with success,

Rochester, N. Y.

ROBERT BUTTS.

Very glad to hear from Rochester, friend Butts, and glad to hear you and your friends admire ALL-SPORTS. Your experience with jiu-jitsu is not unique, and although the system is excellent as a means of defense and against persons who do not understand American wrestling, it is apparently ineffective against anyone who does know how to wrestle. Hope your baseball team will have a successful season.

I take the liberty to write you on behalf of the members of our boys' club here, the Ambler Athletic Association, of which I am president. We organized about a year ago, and through the kindness of one of our leading citizens, have the use of a large loft as a gymnasium and club room. We have nice apparatus, and pretty nearly all the fit boys of the town are members. Last fall we had a football team and played many games, being beaten only once and then by a team of men. One of our members, Daniel Pennell, who is only fifteen years old, is a great athlete, taking ten feet in a standing jump and sixteen in a run. He has a record of ten and a quarter in the hundred-yard dash and put the eight-pound shot fifty-four feet seven inches. He is 5 feet 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches tall; weighs 127 pounds; has a chest measurement of 39 inches; waist, 28 inches; hips, 36 inches; thighs, 21 inches, and calves, 14 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches. We would like to hear records from fellow members in other towns. Wishing you success, and hoping Mr. Stevens will give us some football stories in due season,

FRANK DISKIN.

Ambler, Pa.

Success to the A. A. A., of Ambler. You boys have the right spirit, and we are glad to learn you have the respect and encouragement of the citizens. As for Daniel Pennell, he is certainly a wonder for his age. If you other boys are anywhere near him in physical development, Ambler has reason to be proud of you.

I have been reading all about Jack Lightfoot and the others ever since the stories started, and I must say they are a fine lot. Some of the other fellows round town and myself have decided to do some gymnasium work on our own account, because there is no gymnasium we can use here; we have a few pieces of apparatus, and father let me fit up part of our barn to work in. We are saving up to buy weights and stuff, and by next Fall we will have quite a fine place. I would like to have you tell me, if you can spare the time, just how I ought to train. First, I'll tell you how I measure up now and you can tell me how I compare with the average. Everybody round here says I am very good. Do you think so? I weigh 118 pounds and stand 5 feet 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches. Chest measure is 33 inches; waist, 25 inches; hips, 34 inches; thighs, 20 inches; calf, 13 inches. Father says I can stand another barrel of flour. Most of the fellows are about my height, and if you could criticise me, it would

help us all. Hoping you can spare the time to answer me in your "Chat,"

JOHN C. BARROWS.

Liberty, Kan.

Pleased to hear from you, John, and glad to know you like Jack and his friends. We are always ready to answer letters, and we will manage to spare the time to answer every letter we receive which we have reason to believe has been sent in good faith. Your measurements are interesting. For your height you are a little heavy, but you can stand it. You have a good chest, but your waist is scant; you can easily afford another inch around your body. Your weight must be in solid flesh, by the way. Your hips and thighs run an inch above the ordinary and your calf is just the standard. You need no special exercise except a waist exercise; strengthen your abdomen muscles by judicious waist movements, putting your hands on your hips and swaying your body. Keep up your practice in chest and leg work and you will be in fine condition. It's good to hear from a well-built boy like yourself, and we hope you will take good care of yourself. Hope your gymnasium does all of you lots of good and turns out a group of good, clean, healthy, well set-up American boys, such as Kansas has always done, to its credit.

When I saw that you had concluded to open an applause department in ALL-SPORTS I was delighted, as Teddy might say, because it always makes the readers, scattered over the whole land as they may be, feel like one big family. Somehow, there's a satisfaction about getting together and airing our views concerning the characters we're interested in. Now, for my part, I wish Mr. Stevens would have more to say about the girls of Cranford. To my mind, they are forgotten too often. And I find that, say what you will, the girls enter into the lives of our boys in many ways, besides influencing them to strive to be more manly. Would you mind mentioning this matter to Mr. Stevens at the first opportunity? I feel certain that I am voicing the sentiments of a large class of readers when I say, let us get better acquainted with the girls of old Cranford. Yours, wishing success to ALL-SPORTS and to the Winner Company,

Port Henry, N. Y.

BERT MAYER.

A good idea, Bert, and one which we shall act upon. Indeed, there has been too little said of the girls of Cranford in the past, for which we feel certain the author must entertain regrets when he comes to realize how great an influence these lassies of ours exert over the brothers of other girls. Yes, we shall with pleasure communicate your reasonable request to Mr. Stevens, and beg of him to give the sisters of our boys a more prominent part in some of the future stories. They deserve better treatment in the future. These are the sort of suggestions we are always pleased to receive and consider. Our one aim is to make ALL-SPORTS the favorite weekly of Young America. We are building for a future, and we have high hopes that it may even be a glorious one.

THE EDITOR.

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